

# CHANGES MODULE 23:

## Physical Activity for Wellbeing



### Physical Activity for Wellbeing

Most people know that physical activity is supposed to be good for mental health. Often, however, there can be a lot of challenges that get in the way especially if you experience any form of mental distress. Working more physical activity into our day to day routine can be a complex issue for all of us. For example, having the time, financial resources, balancing responsibilities such as family and work, as well as finding something that you enjoy and motivate yourself towards can all be challenging.

### How Can Getting Active Help You?

On top of all the physical health benefits that come with leading a more active life, exercise can also increase our level of endorphins, decrease cortisol, and act as a natural mood booster. It can keep you grounded and present in your body - away from the whirlwind of your mind, and get you out into nature and increase your levels of Vitamin D.

To begin, the most important thing is to find the activity that feels good to you - this is a personal choice and may take some experimentation. There is a lot of judgement surrounding what should and shouldn't be done with regards to physical activity and body size but the healthiest thing that you can do is listen to what works for you. Consistency is key, so having something that works for your situations is also best - rather than working towards someone else's goal and comparing yourself to others. Getting

active is an individual thing. We are

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swamped by the standards we are 'supposed' to live up to. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and end up doing nothing. Choose to celebrate your own individual path and write your own living standards.

Below are some tips and tricks you could try...

- Make your goals as 'small' as they need to be so they are achievable, and don't forget to celebrate your achievements. Sometimes getting out of bed can be a day's achievement, this is important to recognise and is still an achievement. If this is where you are at right now, it's still worth trying!
- Try weaving in activity to your daily life - i.e. cycle instead of drive, try adding short walks to places close by. Find a reason to leave the house, a little daily stretch feels great for the body and can help you get moving.
- Do something that you enjoy. Something that you are happy to do for the sake of doing it. If joy is a thing that is difficult to feel right now, then do something you care about, something you used to care about or something you used to enjoy.
- Asking for help is not weak. It is smart. Everybody was a beginner once and needed to learn how and

what to do. People who are regularly active know what a

positive effect this has on their lives and are often happy to share!

- Find yourself a workout buddy, a walking partner, or anybody who will help you feel motivated. Our brains are hardwired as pack animals and it is amazing the difference it can make when you get active with company.
- Find a way to track your achievements that works for you. Trackers can affect our emotions in different ways, depending on our current mental state. When we focus on what we have achieved, we can shift our perspective toward the positive. Do you like ticking off lists, marking off calendar days, or filling in charts? Any visualisation of the things you have done that works for you. When your brain decides to go off on a negative narrative, you will have something that is real to prove it wrong. There are plenty of apps that can congratulate you for achieving tasks & show you graphs of your achievements.
- There is no need to compare

yourself to anyone else - the only person who has a right to judge you is yourself. Try to be present and considered in the way that you talk to yourself. Coach yourself the way that you would coach your best friend.

Remember, making new habits is hard at the best of times. Know that you are already the person you intend to be. If you were not then you would not have the intention. Taking time for yourself is a way to show yourself that you deserve to feel good.

### **Further Reading:**

Lift Like A Girl by Nia Shanks  
(<https://niashanks.com/>)

Fitness For Everyone by Louise Green  
(<https://bigfitgirl.com/>)

### **Discussion Options:**

- What does being active mean to you?
- How does your self-talk affect your engagement in exercise?